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DISINTERESTED LOVE;
OR, THE
MODERN ROBIN GREY:

IN A

SERIES of LETTERS,
FOUNDED ON FACTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By a WIDOW LADY.

VOLUME I.

L O N D O N :

Printed for the Benefit of the AUTHOR and Family, and
fold by T. HOOKHAM, NEW BOND STREET.

M DCC. LXXXVIII.

DISCOVERED
OF THE
MODERN ROBIN GREEN
SERIES OF LETTERS
FOUNDED ON FACTS

L.A.D.F.



Volume I

LONDON

Printed by J. G. & J. S. ...
...
...

DISINTERESTED LOVE;

OR, THE

MODERN ROBIN GREY.

LETTER I.

LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM TO MISS GORDON.

MY safe arrival at the metropolis has already been made known to you, I presume, by my beloved mother; to whom I dispatched a line the moment I arrived in Berkeley-square, to ease her maternal bosom of the uneasiness I too well knew she would feel, until she was assured her Lucy was safe under the protection of her sister. My kind guardian, and my amiable

VOL. I.

B

able

able Maria, would not be without their fears ; but now I hope they are all at ease, and that my duty, attention, and friendship, which will ever remain unabated, will serve in some measure to console them for my absence. The promise that you made of being as much as possible at Belmont, will give me the truest pleasure ; for not all the gaieties, I may hereafter engage in, will ever obliterate from my remembrance, those who are so dear to me. My eloquence, which you predicted to be infallible, at length you find *has* failed ; for though exerted to the utmost, it could not prevail on my venerable parent to leave the family mansion. Her infirm health, the sorrow she has never ceased to indulge for my father, added to some other family reasons, were such forcible pleas, that I yielded up the point, and could only thank her for her indulgence in permitting me to accept the invitation of Lady Mary. Sir William seemed almost sorry for the permission she had granted, lest, I suppose, I should

should be corrupted in this licentious town : he has, however, promised to write to me frequently ; and tells me if I pay the same attention *here* to his precepts, that I did in the country, there will be no danger of my being *contaminated*, although in the vortex of folly.

Amiable man ! his friendship, his good sense, his benevolent disposition, and the integrity, the unremitted care with which he has executed the trust reposed in him by my father, fills my mind with every sensation, gratitude and respect can inspire ; and surely that will be sufficient to induce my compliance with all he prescribes, since I am convinced it will be alone for my welfare. But he need not fear, my sister is amiable, and though living in the fashionable world may have altered her manners ; yet she cannot surely have forgotten the virtuous principles which were early instilled in her mind. Mr. Foster, whom, I must acknowledge, I believe fortune was the chief induce-

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ment to her marrying, is a good sort of man ; but without any of those accomplishments which attract the eye and engage the heart : their house, their carriages, are quite in stile.

Though I am not an absolute stranger to London, yet as I was very young when my father had a house there, all appears new. I have not been any where at present, for I really have not recovered from the fatigue attendant on so long a journey ; neither have my spirits yet acquired their usual tone. I still feel the maternal embrace, and the tear which dropt on my cheek from her dear eyes, has been too often renewed from mine to be so soon forgotten. Sir William was indisposed the morning I came away ; I was therefore spared the pain of bidding him adieu ! but just as I was stepping into the carriage I had a note from him, wishing me all happiness ; and enclosing a fifty pound bank bill for my extra expences—generous man !—he thought it

was

was not in the power of my mother to do for me what she might perhaps wish; and thus he prevented all my wants. My journey, you may imagine, with these sensations, together with the inclement season, could not be either cheerful or agreeable; Fanny too was nearly as dejected as her mistress. We met with a most kind reception. I will not say how much I was pained at parting with my Maria, since it would only be to recount her own feelings; and as I have nothing entertaining to relate, I shall conclude, with assuring her, how much I am

Her affectionate,

LUCY LESSINGHAM,

LETTER II.

SIR WILLIAM ARLINGTON TO LADY
LUCY LESSINGHAM.

THE permission granted me by my amiable Lady Lucy, of still being indulged with the privilege of being her preceptor, as well as guardian, cannot fail of giving me the most heart-felt satisfaction; and not only from the pleasure I shall feel in being considered by her in so esteemable a light, but in hopes that I may be of some service to her, to guide her inexperienced steps safe to the paths of rectitude. And though I am persuaded, few young persons possess more virtues; yet youth, and inexperience alone,

I may

may sometimes lead her to wish for some friendly hand to point the road most likely to ensure her happiness.

You are entering now upon a new scene of life; you have left the domestic circle, the arms of a fond mother, the confined and innocent joys of the country; you have exchanged them for the enlarged, and more enlivened, though perhaps not *more* permanent joys of a town life, and all its attendant pleasures. You are making your entrée on the theatre of life; and if your principles remain uncorrupted, from bad examples, or prejudicial advice, I am convinced you will do it with éclat to yourself, and honour to your friends. You will soon, my lady, arrive at the period, which the world allows to be years of discretion. *You* have already proved your right to the title; but I fear there are very few instances where the opinion of the world, though a generally received one, should be the criterion. However, that is not my intention at

present to investigate. The slender fortune left you by your father will soon come into your possession. You will find I have endeavour'd, as far as was in my power, to improve it for your sake. You have too much good sense to regret the smallness of it; since, believe me, riches can never insure happiness; and the consciousness that your father's *honour* was the means of lessening it, will serve as a consolation: for, had not his integrity influenced him to pay the debts your grandfather was involved in, it might have been large; but the reflection of having acted *right*, served to console him and your amiable mother, for the want of that splendour they had so just a title to; but which they gave up without a sigh, and retired to Belmont, hoping, by oeconomy, to secure a moderate competence for their children, exclusive of the estate which devolved to your brother. I wish, alas! his manners at all resembled those of your excellent parents. However, he is young, and though he has
thrown

THE MODERN ROBIN GREY.

thrown off my counsel, as though it had been a galling yoke, yet will I hope, time will shew him his errors; and he will at length be all our best wishes can prognosticate, and we should not be too clear sighted to the follies of youth.

Your sister I have resigned to Mr. Foster, and I trust she is happy. Your ladyship is the only one remaining under my guardianship; happy shall I be if my advice may at all serve to warn you from the syren shores of vanity and dissipation; for they alone are too frequently the source of numberless evils. And, be assured, a deviation from the paths of prudence will ever be attended with remorse to those, whose virtuous education will not let them pass unblushing, "through the flow'ry maze of vice."

That you, my dear lady Lucy, may never experience the pain arising from such sensations, is the sincere wish of your true friend,

W. ARLINGTON.

B 5

LET.

L E T T E R I I I .

LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM TO MISS GORDON.

AS the performance of a promise to me is as sacred as the payment of a debt, inability alone can excuse my receding from *that* I have so often repeated to my dear Maria, of writing constantly to her whilst I am an inhabitant of this gay world ; and as her friendship, I know, induces her to take part and interest herself in every circumstance relating to her Lucy ; and as she has expressed a desire to be informed of the minutest, I will lay before her every transaction that may arise ; hoping that she will cast the veil of partiality over my errors, and excuse the prolixity and inaccuracy of my pen.

pen. In my last I was too agitated to forget for one moment the egotist; but now I hope to be able to give you some little account of the manners and customs, &c. of this nouvelle scene.

My sister you would no longer recognize as the gay lively hoyden, and the artless companion. Two years residence in the beau-monde has been sufficient to erase every former idea; and her manners are so totally altered, or as she would express it, so intirely *reform'd*, there is not indeed, even a "wreck left behind" of her former self, except her person, and there the vestiges of late hours are but too plain. To sum up all, she is grown quite a modern fine lady, only with some exceptions, which are to her credit, for she keeps within the rules of decorum, which too many of the *ton* deem quite unnecessary. My *appearance* and *wardrobe*, you may conclude to be absolutely antediluvian; and of course lady Mary's first business was to have me
equip'd.

equip'd somewhat in the modern style ; as the introduction of such a *rustic* among her polite acquaintance, would fill her with confusion, especially as I happen to stand so near her ladyship in the ties of consanguinity. Poor Mr. Foster seems little to trouble himself with all these fine manoeuvres ; he leaves it intirely to his wife to rule his house, and keep up his consequence.

My brother did me the honour of a visit the morning after my arrival ; and if I was struck at the alteration in lady Mary, I was petrified at the sight of lord B——. He is now become intirely a man of fashion. Every feeling, every soft sensation, seems to bow obedient to the despotic power ; and I verily think, he would scarce acknowledge his sister, if her appearance did not in some degree accord with his ideas of it. To illustrate my assertion, which possibly you may be inclined to doubt, I will give you an instance. As soon as the first salutations were

were over, he turn'd to my sister—"for heaven's sake, lady Mary, lose no time in accoutreing this *country lady*, with the proper habiliments to appear in *here*;—by G—d, I would not have her, for the world, seen by any of my friends in her present state: the girl would be an eternal disgrace to us." I could scarce help bursting into tears; and reply'd, if that is your lordship's opinion of me, I had better not make my appearance; at least not till I have learn'd to submit to rudeness and insult without emotion. Lady Mary saw I was hurt, and kindly encouraged me, saying to him, I have no doubt, my lord, but when Lucy's apparements arrive from Madame Devisme's, we shall rather have cause to exult in our pretty sister, than fear her disgracing us. Why, why, return'd he, yawning, your la'ship may be right; but what a woman *is* in this divine age of refinement is of little consequence, it is only what she *appears*; and I think your ladyship need not be told, since the last packet arrived from

Paris,

Paris, the most homely rustic may be converted into a beauty. Oh! Maria, if this is London; if appearances are indeed so deceitful, ought I not to regret leaving Belmont? where all was truth, and as it seemed. However, continued my precious brother, if you will be ready, I will attend you to see the Siddons tomorrow. Yes, returned lady Mary; and, recollect, I expect you the next day to our *petite* party here.—I deferred writing that I might give my Maria an account of some of our fine procedures. My paraphernalia is near complete, elegant and in taste, you may believe. Monsieur Fargeon has the direction of my head; the *outside only* though, you are to understand. My hair has been cut and tortur'd a thousand ways already, and no small degree of patience is requisite to resign ones self for two or three hours to their unmerciful hands. I went in what is called a genteel half-dress to the play, and though I was totally engross'd in viewing the strange metamorphosis in myself,

self, the play, which was Venice Preserv'd, no sooner began, than all my attention was turn'd to that; and my emotions were rather too violent for *politeness*; for, as his lordship took occasion to observe, all people of fashion have not only their *features*, but their *feelings*, under a proper subordination; and nothing can be more *barbarous*, than betraying any signs of that absurd thing called *pity*, at the distress of another, whether the cause be *real* or *imaginary*; but my heart recoil'd at his sentiments, and I entered into all the distress of the inimitable heroine. You have read the play; judge of my feelings, at seeing every pathetic scene so incomparably represented. Oh! great are the pleasures arising from susceptibility; many, indeed, and exquisite are the pains likewise attendant on it. Do not accuse me of vanity, when I say, an enlarged mind only is capable of these mental enjoyments, and by them only can these delicate sensations be comprehended.

The

The last evening lady Mary had what she styled, a select party, purposely to introduce me to some of her particular friends. I must own I felt piqued at my brother's reflection, and I therefore took pains to be dress'd for the occasion, that I might not *disgrace* him. I received numberless compliments, and heard a thousand extravagant encomiums in audible whispers; but they were too gross to please. A Sir James Harrill paid me very particular attention; he is a friend of Lord B's, though not such a coxcomb, yet equally disagreeable in his manners. The ladies, in general, I did not admire, for the unrestrained freedom of their manners, and the insipidity of their conversation; for they seemed only to

“ Harangue on fashions, point and lace,

“ On this one's errors, t'other's face;

“ Talk much of Italy and France,

“ Of a new song or a country dance.”

Lady Mellville, however, I must except, for the amiable expression painted on
her

her countenance, and the *difference* of her behaviour. Miss Conway, her ladyship's niece, affected to be very fond of me; but I must own, "'twas all in vain." They were all soon engaged at cards. I am such a novice in all the polite games, I could only be a looker on; but I really think, from the uncommon avidity with which they entered into the several games, there must be some charm in cards undiscoverable to those who do not play, for their whole attention seem'd to be absorbed; yet to risk such large sums is certainly very reprehensible, even in those whose fortunes may, in some degree, allow of such extravagance. They endeavoured to prevail on me to sit down, offering to teach me; I persisted, however, in a refusal: but, shall I own to my Maria, it was not without regret, that I felt myself obliged to do it, from *another motive*, than that of *inclination*. To you will I confess all my weakness; but I should blush to have either Sir William or my revered mother acquainted with it. I

write

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write them * this post. I have only therefore to add, I am, as I shall ever remain, my Maria's affectionate

LUCY LESSINGHAM.

• These letters do not appear.

LET-

LETTER IV.

SIR JAMES HARRILL TO CAPT. BEVILLE.

AT length, Beville, I must allow myself conquer'd; not in the field of Mars, but in the cause of Venus. I can no longer boast my freedom, it is lost, irrecoverably lost, and I have not even the power left me of wishing it back. You will be impatient to know how I got into this cursed hobble; 'twas at lady Mary Foster's assembly; her sister, lady Lucy Lessingham, is just come to town to spend the winter with her; and 'tis to her divinityship I pay my adoration. By heaven, she would warm the cold bosom of an Anchorite.

———"She is fairer than fam'd of old—

"Of fairy damsels met in forest wide;

"By errand knights."

Come

Come and see her, and give me credit for my taste; though I know not whether you do not too nearly resemble her cox-comical fool of a brother, to admire *pure* nature, unadorned by *fashion* or art, tho' a master-piece of the old fashion'd dames: I should be cursedly afraid of having a fine fellow, like you, thrown in her way, were I not tolerably certain *you* must turn your eyes elsewhere; for her fortune is very small, and her family happens to be rather too high to attempt any thing dishonourable. Still I have an aversion to matrimony. She is not initiated yet. All innocent simplicity. However, cards must be the test; if, in future, she should discover any goût for the *facinators*, then, perhaps, there may be some chance of succeeding without. In such a case, I warn you to stand clear, for tho' you have little to fear from his cowardly lordship; upon such an occasion as the frustration of my darling hopes, I should not scruple a tilt with you myself. For the present I am, as usual, yours, &c.

JAMES HARRILL.

LETTER V.

SIR WILLIAM ARLINGTON TO LADY
LUCY LESSINGHAM.

I FEAR my 'amiable ward will repent her condescension, in allowing me to offer my best advice upon every occasion that may arise; but the apprehension that you will now, more than ever, stand in need of it, is an additional inducement with me to take advantage of your humility. To guard your heart from the corruptions of mortals is my sole view in the lectures I have given, or shall from time to time presume to give you. I tremble, when I reflect on the temptations your beauty and inexperience may render you liable to; and which I fear even your rank

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rank will be insufficient to guard you from. Beware of flattery! delusive charm! how great is its power; how pernicious are its effects: the old, whom experience has rendered cautious, cannot withstand its influence; how then shall the young? open, and incapable of deceit, believing others as sincere as themselves, how easily do they fall into its bewitching snares. How baneful are its impressions! Most carefully then should your sex guard against the insinuating venom. It is not the open gross attack I seek to warn you of, as the disgust you will feel towards such will be sufficient; but from the insidious trayer, who seeks to seduce your ears with his refined language, and endeavours to gain your heart by ruining your principles. *Advice, when asked, except it happens to coincide with our wishes, is seldom attended to; but, when given unasked, there is most certainly the less obligation to follow it.* Your ladyship has flattered me hitherto, by paying the utmost deference to mine. I shall soon be able to discover

ver whether it continues to be taken in the friendly part it is offer'd in; as your deviation from the rules I may wish to prescribe, will be a sure indication of its being unwelcome. I shall then desist; and all that will be left me, will be to deplore your too early initiation into a world, where, to escape unhurt, is almost a miracle. Your unsuspecting nature, unhackney'd in the ways of men, cannot have any conception of the arts and blandishments they will use to gain a favorite point; but, when gain'd, the innumerable instances that happen, render it needless for me to illustrate, how soon thrown aside, and neglected. I do not mean to infer, that every man who may address you, will do it with dishonourable intentions. Captivated by your virtues and accomplishments, many there are who, no doubt, will address you upon honourable terms, in the common acceptation of the word; that is, they will marry you; and while the novelty lasts, they

they will keep up the farce of love. But soon, too soon, alas ! will they drop the mask, and you will find cold, frigid indifference, substituted in place of the glowing picture your imagination had drawn ; and, by your own feelings, vainly supposed, was to last for ever.

Guard then your heart from the attacks of the herd of fops that flutter round you ; they have not souls to understand the passion, they may affect, but can never feel. Do not let your eye mislead your heart, nor give implicit credit to appearances ; they are too deceptious. But some there are, who, beyond dispute, will do justice to your merit. However, for the present, I will not enlarge farther upon the subject ; to intend for the best is all that lies in our power ; the event depends not on blind mortality, who cannot see beyond the present effect. Were we contented to rely on the superior Power, who alone sees the fit and the unfit, we should escape
many

many of the quick-sands, to which, thro' our own imprudence, we are so continually liable. Forgive me, my dear Lady Lucy, these grave reflections, and believe a concern for your welfare could alone give rise to them. In ten days time, perhaps, I shall have the satisfaction of seeing, whether the knowledge you have gained of the world, has yet been able to efface those natural charms which are above all others. My affairs will require my attendance in town; but as Rosebury is so short a distance, I purpose being chiefly there, except when business calls; but wherever I am, I cannot give up my correspondence with your ladyship, for I fear your patience would not allow you to sit contentedly, and *bear* my antiquated declamations, tho' your goodness may induce you to dedicate a leisure half-hour to read my letters. I cannot conclude without telling you, that since you left Belmont it has lost all its wonted chearfulness. You

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may believe what I say to you ; since,
after the sentence I have pass'd on flat-
tery, it would be too bad to be guilty
of it myself ; and, in truth, I am,

Your Ladyship's

Most sincere friend,

WM. ARLINGTON.

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L E T T E R VI.

SIR WM. ARLINGTON TO LORD STANMORE.

IF your lordship persists in your determination of spending the winter at Paris, I believe, in spite of my disinclination for travelling, I must take a trip to you, as I never stood so infinitely in need of your advice and assistance. Surely, my lord, you are grown indifferent to the calls of friendship, or you could not have so long withstood my repeated solicitations to return to your native country; but, as they have proved ineffectual, my pen must acquaint you, and perhaps better acquaint you with the subject on which I wish your counsel, than my

my tongue ; for I blush to disclose the cause that disturbs my peace, as I fear it is too evidently founded in my weakness. Alas ! my lord ! notwithstanding I apparently possess every worldly good, I am miserable ! Though I have, through life, invariably endeavour'd to keep in view, that to " be good, is to be happy ;" I have lived to prove its fallacy. But I retract ; for though my happiness is embitter'd *here*, I shall find it, I trust, uninterrupted, *where* the " weary are at rest." Before I proceed, I must bespeak your lordship's pity, and I must premise that I cannot bear your ridicule, though I am persuaded I am but too liable to it, when I acknowledge an *attachment* to have robbed me of my tranquillity, and that the object of it is young enough to be my daughter. Sensible of the folly of a man of my years giving way to such sensations, I have left no means untried to conquer this unhappy predilection, tho' hitherto it has proved unavailable. It has already affected my health ; and I am
convinced,

convinced, unless some favourable turn takes place, the perpetual uneasiness my mind endures will totally undermine it. I have disclosed it to your lordship, hoping I may receive benefit from your advice; and to relieve my heart, in some measure, of the load that oppresses it; for I have not only a passion to combat, but the idea of those stinging reflections, which the world is so liberal in bestowing on every unfortunate object who deviates from the beaten path: but whoever places their happiness on its opinion, will pass many restless days and sleepless nights. Some respect is certainly due to reputation; it is impossible to avoid slander; we should therefore endeavour to set the many-tongued dæmon at defiance. I could produce many arguments to this effect; but I have no idea of striving, by fallacious reasoning, and false sophistry, to justify those actions, which must appear *imprudent*, if not *improper*. I would rather confess my weakness, and seek to derive consolation from the aid of friendship.

ship. Your lordship, however, will be impatient to know who is the object of my anxiety; and your surprise will be great, when I inform you it is my WARD *Lady Lucy*. You have seen her, therefore on the subject of her personal accomplishments I will be silent; but, believe me, the innate goodness of her heart, her unaffected manners, the virtues and graces of her mind, which I have been a daily witness to the progression of, could alone have power to attract me. The light in which I stood as guardian, and that which I took upon myself as preceptor, in some small degree, (for the death of her father, and living in the country, made my assistance of use, and thankfully received by her mother;) all concurred to render me doubly sensible to those perfections, of which the superficial observer could have no conception.

“ I watch’d the early dawning of her eye ;

“ As men for day-break watch the eastern

“ sky.”

I found

I found myself involved in a passion before I was aware of my danger; and, fully convinced of its impropriety, have studiously endeavoured to conceal it within my own breast. She has ever shown for me a regard truly filial; nor has she, I am assured, the smallest idea that *my* sentiments are other than those a father would feel towards his daughter. She has ever paid the utmost deference to my precepts, and attention to myself. She is now with Lady Mary Foster, where she will spend the winter. I am preparing to follow her very shortly; for, I will honestly own, I can no longer endure Belmont, which is for ever presenting to my imagination some interesting picture of her, who is but too frequently the subject of my thoughts.

I shall take up my abode chiefly at Rosebury, as the smallness of the distance will prevent the inconvenience that might arise from going backwards and forwards. The air of London altogether would be

too foggy for my constitution, which is now, more than ever, inclinable to the consumptive. I shall set out in ten days; and let me beg your lordship will lose no time in writing to me; let me have your opinion unreserved. I am at a loss how to act. Why should I sacrifice so much to the prejudice I despise? Yet the apprehension of the world's censure is not the only barrier; her heart is yet untouched; and should it even continue so, would she view me in the light I wish to appear in, without disgust? I cannot help anticipating the surprise she will be in at the discovery of my sentiments. A reluctant constrained consent, to me would not be satisfactory; for the idea, that gratitude, or interest, were the *sole* motives, would render me, strange as it may appear, still more unhappy than I am. Her mother shall remain unacquainted with my intention, 'till I have spoken to her; for I will not owe my success to persuasion, which the largeness of my fortune might induce; neither will I make the

amiable

amiable girl *unhappy*, if I cannot make her happy. Our misfortunes are too frequently of our own seeking; mine is involuntary: but it is the lot of mortals ever to have some darkening cloud to impede the beams of happiness we vainly flatter ourselves with possessing unimbitter'd. To every condition is annexed some draw-back to render its pleasures imperfect.

Adieu, my lord; write to me immediately; and, if possible, relieve the distress of, your lordship's sincere

Friend and servant,

WM. ARLINGTON.

C 5 LET.

LETTER VII.

MISS GORDON TO LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM.

I FLATTER myself this letter will be doubly welcome to my beloved Lady Lucy, when she receives it from the hands of Sir William. I have nothing material to write, yet I could not resist so favourable an opportunity of sending you my best wishes. Indeed the situation I am in

“ Condemn’d to wholesome plain work,

“ And to croaking rooks ;

“ Dull aunts, old fashion’d halls, and godly
“ books,”

admits of so little variety, a letter from me is not worth having. The pleasures of a country life are calm, and tranquil ;
but

but so insipid, and invariably the same, they are scarce ever worth relating, and at this dreary season cannot indeed be even spoken of. It is from my Lucy I expect information and amusement; her animated descriptions of the *nouvelle* scenes she will engage in, will chase away the dull hours of many a gloomy winter evening. We shall have great reason to regret Sir William's departure, for in him we shall lose the sensible, the instructive, and agreeable companion; and it is no inconsiderable loss in a stupid country village, where there is not the most distant possibility of repairing it, or even meeting with a tolerable substitute. As to his sister, poor Mrs. Eleanor, good soul, she is only fit to be consulted upon a contested point in "Mrs. Glass's Art of Cookery," or to give her opinion of the flavour of a glass of right Nantz; a subject she is no less attach'd to. Surely they can never claim kindred with the appearance of probability; however, with a few failings, she is a worthy woman, and it is a pity
 som

some curate has never been able to discover her virtues, and take her "for better for worse." I imagine she has given over all thought of the male sex; though it is a point that can never be determined with certainty; for was the old lady briskly attacked, perhaps the dying embers might revive, and incline her to verify the old saying, "better late, &c." I see my sweet Lucy frowns, and is displeased at her Maria's raillery, when it points to our respected Sir William, so near as in the person of his sister; he certainly cannot be blind, though he is indulgent to her follies. *You* are, I may venture to affirm, the magnet, that has drawn him to town. He said business required his presence there; but, I believe, his chief business was to watch over his ward, for fear some dear Adonis, without his leave, should step in and bear away the precious prize. The old gentleman certainly has the most unbounded affection for you; and I should be half inclined to suspect he entertained a *ten-*

dresse

dresse for your ladyship, were not the disparity of years, and the friendship he professed for your father so great. He is not well, I hope with his spirits he will recover his health; it is past a doubt you took them with you when you went to town. I was much diverted at the description of the metamorphosis you have undergone, it could not be much for the better. The people, however, whose province it is, may labour to embellish your external form with finery, but they can add nothing to your internal worth. Take care then, my Lucy, they do not *lessen*, for they cannot augment it; particularly those you are cast amongst.—Your brother I cannot endure; and Lady Mary, according to my ideas, is not *improved*, though her ladyship may think so, and of course condemn the opinion of a poor uninformed rustic. With all the tenderness of my affection, I am inclined to fear, their society, and that of their friends, will cause a change in your ladyship, and you will not return to Belmont the same as you left

left

left it; but you are fortunate in being the peculiar care of heaven, who has raised you up a guardian, and a guide, with every disposition towards your welfare, and with the most enlarged abilities. Let me now deprecate my Lucy's anger, and reassure her I am constant in my visits to her beloved parent, and constant in my prayers to ask of heaven her "safe return, with all that can improve her."

MARIA GORDON.

L E T T E R VIII.

LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM TO MISS GORDON.

HAD your letter required a passport, it could not have met with a more effectual one than Sir William ; but, believe me, my dear Maria, my heart vibrates in unison with yours ; and there needs no other recommendation to render your letters welcome, than being *yours*. If I was delighted at seeing the worthy man, I was pained at the alteration too visible in him, for he appears more than half in a decline, and so languid and spiritless. He arrived yesterday about twelve, and, shameful to relate, the *dejeune* was not removed ;

moved ; for the first moments, however,
 our attention were wholly taken up with
 each other. He informed me he intend-
 ed coming, but I did not believe it would
 be so soon. When I saw the chaise stop at
 the door, I flew out to meet him ; and,
 in an instant, found myself press'd to his
 bosom. Without giving him time to
 answer one, I ask'd him fifty questions,
 relative to my revered mother, my loved
 Maria, and all our friends at B. When
 our first emotions had a little subsided,
 he looked earnestly at me, and asked,
 " Whether London had answered my ex-
 pectations ? I perceive," added he, " a
 material alteration in your person, which,
 I presume, is in conformity to the fashion.
 I grant you my permission for *that*,
 though," continued he, " I cannot flat-
 ter you by saying, your *new* mode of dress,
 and your altered hours (alluding to our
 late breakfast) have at all improved it.
 Perhaps you may think it owing to my
 want of taste, or discernment, but I can-
 not compliment at the expence of my
 sincerity ;

sincerity ; and I hope, my amiable Lady Lucy, however fashionable you may think it necessary to affect being outwardly, *your heart* will still acknowledge those old fashioned principles which I should grieve to have forgotten ; you never can *substitute* any that will be half as good."—Here he ceased speaking. 'Taking his hand and pressing it to my lips, do me the justice to believe, my dear Sir William, return'd I, you have not bestow'd your time and attention to so little purpose, as that one short month can destroy what years have been effecting. No ! believe the precepts of her guardian have made too indelible an impression on the mind of your Lucy to be so easily erased ; but yet, as too many fall from placing too great a confidence in their own strength, let me hope you will continue to me your revered advice, and in that will I place my security, with the certainty of being proof against temptation. He seemed much affected ; but the entrance of Lady M——, to beg he would take some refreshment, prevented his

his reply. He staid dinner, but went soon after, as we were engaged out in the evening. They politely offered him an apartment in Berkeley-square, but he chose not to accept of it; saying, he should be a great deal at Rosebury, and that he had already ordered his man to secure apartments for him at the hotel while he staid in town. The different manner of living here to what he is accustom'd, was his chief reason, I suppose, his declining it. He took an opportunity before he went, in the most delicate manner that can be conceived, to ask me if I had made use of the *trifle* he took the liberty of sending me on my departure from B.; saying, in the kindest manner, I must give him leave, during my residence here, to be my banker; that I could not upon every occasion so readily apply to Lady B.; and as *fashion* was rather more expensive than simplicity, I must allow him to replenish my stock. Generous man! Surely there is a manner in conferring an obligation, which renders it doubly valuable.

able.—“Hail, ye small sweet courtesies of
 “life, for smooth do ye make the road of
 “it! like grace and beauty join’d, which
 “beget inclination at first sight; ’tis ye
 “who open the door and let the stranger
 “in.”—Excuse, my Maria, this little digression, it seem’d so very *a-propos*, I could not help indulging myself. I thank’d him in a voice scarcely audible, and assur’d him I stood in no need of his offer’d kindness, as I had not yet broke in upon the bounty he had already so delicately bestowed.—And now let me continue my narrative of proceedings.

My whole time is employ’d in *seeing*, and being *seen*, for each are of equal moment, and appear to be the sole end of fashionable people’s existence. The opera is enchanting; and, to a soul devoted to harmony, as mine is, there cannot be conceived so high a gratification. We are always attended by a *succession* of beaux; Sir James Harril, in particular, is constant in his attendance, and
 provokes

provokes me extremely by the great attention he affects to pay me; Lady Mary and my brother seem to encourage him, thinking him, I suppose, an eligible match. If he should make a serious declaration, and I have some reason to imagine he will, I shall take the opportunity of dismissing him at once, for he is not a man I can ever feel the least love or affection for. The other night at Almac's, I was agreeably surprized at the sight of Captain Beville, whom you must remember to have seen at the assembly at C—, where his regiment was then quartered, and with whom I danced; he immediately recognized me, and very politely paid his compliments, requesting, at the same time, the honor of my hand for the evening; I was already engaged to a Mr. Harley, therefore under the necessity of refusing him, though to my very great regret. My partner was very mediocre, and the comparison, which was too apparent in favour of Beville, rendered him quite odious, and he had

had but little reason to boast of his success. Beville certainly must be allowed to possess those external graces in an eminent degree, which cannot fail of prepossessing every impartial beholder in his favour. In short, he is master of every *agrement* to attract the eye and engage the heart; but, let me add, *mine* is yet proof against them all. He paid me a thousand compliments on the improvement London had made in those charms, which, he added, *before* could scarce be equalled. O vanity! vanity! how delusive, how unreal are thy fairest promises, yet we still pursue the idle phantom, till we become convinced of its delusions, to our mortification; it is ever buoyant, but only while kept within very prescribed bounds, is it at all allowable. I have been to several routs, and at length have been prevailed on to join in the card parties. I was absolutely unable to resist so many united persuasions; and Lord B. told me it would be quite savage to sit out always, for every body would conclude

clude want of money alone was the cause of my obstinacy. Capt. Beville added his soft persuasive eloquence to his lordship's disagreeable truths, so that I sat down at last to *veng't-une* ; it was at Lady Sandford's ; the largeness of the stake really made me tremble, yet I determined, if I did play, to keep within bounds respecting *that*. Though only a learner, I came off a considerable winner ; and my success so elated me, that though my cool reflections reprobated the idea, yet as I won, I fancied I could no longer object playing as high as the rest of the party : I hope the fickle goddess will prove favourable to me, as it will not suit my finances to lose. I must own, to enter with spirit into the game, cards become interesting ; but at first I was prevailed on to set down, more to avoid the appearance of singularity, and to prevent Sir James teasing me, than from any pleasure I imagined I should receive. Sir William knows not of my being quite so *tomish* ; neither would I, by any means, wish

wish he should. Lord B. is grown of late very attentive to me, frequently proposing parties, and no longer mortifying me with his humiliating speeches. I suppose now he sees I am somewhat initiated in what is term'd *du monde*; he is no longer afraid of my disgracing him; and, for the honour of his heart, though thickly incrusted with folly, I will hope he is not an intire stranger to fraternal sensations. He is a warm advocate for Sir James, but 'tis to no purpose; his assuming manners, and his effrontery, disgusts me, and I let him see it does, by a studied coldness on my part. Not so, the polite insinuating Beville; all manly, no seeming affectation, so much meaning and penetration in his face, so much gaiety and spirit, and so little of the monkey; differing widely from the generality of our *beaux*, who appear mere over-grown ones; but I will not be too lavish in my encomiums, lest you should suspect I am already too interested. I shall

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shall therefore conclude, with repeating
to my Maria, the old story, that I am
her unalterable friend,

LUCY LESSINGHAM.

LET-

LETTER IX.

CAPTAIN BEVILLE TO CAPTAIN STUART.

I INFINITELY regret, my dear Stuart, your provoking absence, since the town was never more alive; I hope, however, your little Nancy affords you some consolation for the penance you are obliged to endure at F—— in this horrid season of the year. She held out a long siege, but you know I prognosticated she would be brought to capitulate. I trust, in future, you will pay a due deference to my predictions. I begin to feel myself quite enlivened; this infallible air has already blown off

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the rust I contracted, and I am my own man again; and, vanity apart, as handsome a fellow as ever wore that all-attractive ornament in a female eye, called a *cockade*; and I hope they still find it so, to the utter destruction of their poor little hearts. I met the other night with Lady Lucy Lessingham; and as she is handsome, and of some consideration, I immediately *recollected* her. She received my attentions with no small degree of complacency. I shewed you Harrill's letter, therefore you already know he is much captivated with her, and indeed very near becoming one of Cupid's truest votaries; she repays him, *as usual*, with scorn and indifference. I verily believe he is so far gone as to intend making serious proposals. We have frequent disputes on this said passion. He seems to think supreme happiness consists in an immoderate devotion to one object. I, on the contrary, believe

believe it more likely to be found in general gallantry. I own the ladies have a right to our homage; and by a thousand little attentions we may endeavour to gain *their favour*, but ought never to engage in serious attachments that interrupt our felicity, and make us neglect our duty and our fortune. A military hero should have a new mistress as often as he marches into a new town; he should make love no more than an amusement. A degree of it is, I confess, necessary for the attainment of that politeness peculiar to the conversation of accomplished women. They soften the ferocity of our natures, and, it must be acknowledged, understand the refinement of manners and behaviour. But I will always maintain, the most dangerous thing in the world is that foolish intoxication, which renders us incapable of every other pursuit than running after a beautiful doll. Persons thus

infatuated, become a burthen to their acquaintance as well as to themselves; they renounce all the pleasures of society; they sigh, groan, and are always unhappy, often jealous and ill-humoured; and the purchase of one happy moment is frequently at the expence of a million of miserable ones that precede and follow it.

Acknowledging these sentiments, which I confess to be my real ones, should I not be the cursedest fool in nature to run unwittingly into a fire? the heat of which is so intolerable, it keeps the soul in a continual restless agitation. No, no, I admire Lady Lucy; but Sir James may take her when he pleases, *I* am not calculated for the life of shackles; the only chains that can hold me in durance vile must be gold. I despise rosy fetters, and all the idle stuff appertaining thereto. Fortune has been a spiteful jade to me,
but

But I will never encumber myself with a lady for life, without she brings her weight in gold as an equivalent ; even then she must not be a toothless old dowager. 'Tis to the

“ Mountain nymph, sweet liberty,

“ I pay my vows:

Though I must disguise my sentiments, or I shall get none of the pretty fools to *philander* with. For a man no sooner says a civil thing, than, one and all, they form designs to noose him ; though, in the end, they *only deceive themselves*.

Lady Lucy has discovered a predilection for cards I did not expect ; were I Harrill, I should build great hopes thereon, without going quite so far as the irrevocable ceremony ; *he* once had such an idea, though now I believe he has given it up. It is very like villainy for a man premeditatedly to take *advantage* of the failings of a virtuous

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woman to her *dis*advantage; or, if I could compass the cash, I might be inclinable to try *my* success. How dangerous then is it for a woman to indulge so pernicious a foible! And with this sage reflection I shall close my letter. I am, dear Stuart, yours,

HENRY BEVILLE.

L E T.

LETTER X.

LORD STANMORE TO SIR WILLIAM
ARLINGTON.

TO attest my readiness in complying with every request of my esteemed friend, especially where there is the hope of being serviceable, I lose no time in answering his letter. I shall not comment on the *surprize* the *subject* of it occasioned; it is sufficient, if he suffers, to engage my pity, and command my most strenuous exertions towards his relief; would to heaven they might be effectual.

D 4

You

You have desired my *unreserved* opinion, and I am too well acquainted with your ~~good sense to fear~~ I shall incur your displeasure by giving it, since true philanthropy knows not the distinction ~~of~~ difference of sentiments makes in a vulgar mind. Your apprehensions of the censure of the world, my dear Sir William, is, I fear, but too well grounded; and I grieve to find you devoted to a ridiculous passion. The worth of the object I will not pretend to dispute; but, for ~~your~~ *your* sake, I could readily make some abatement in her perfections, could I, by so doing, *add* to her years. The opinion of the commonalty is generally disregarded, though it is often the truest criterion of our actions, since our pretended friends usually accommodate themselves to our wishes, and seldom tell us a disagreeable truth; but reflect how universally so unequal an union will be condemned by those who have

no

no selfish views to answer; it will draw on *you* the contempt and ridicule of the world, and expose your wife to the licentious attacks of every libertine who may think her worth his attention. I mean not to depreciate the virtue of Lady Lucy, but consult your *reason*, my friend, and it will tell you nothing can be more absurd than the ridiculous persuasion of raising a flame in the breast of youth from the ashes of *age*. And though her ladyship regards you with the highest esteem, *filial* affection differs widely from the passion you would wish to inspire; you will find it a difficult task, to appear in the character of an enamorado at sixty without being contemptible; and after the respected light you have stood in it will be still more arduous. Take my word for it you would never be happy though united to Lady Lucy. How mortifying would you find it, to be significantly pointed at as the aged

husband of your youthful wife. To the gay giddy multitude, the appearance of men in the decline of life is always unfavourable; it is not possible to form for them an immediate prepossession; that can only arise from long habit, and a thorough knowledge of their internal merit; and few women, in my opinion, would be comfortable while subject to the reflection, that if they had possessed either sincerity or honour, they never would have consented to such an union; and of course that they only married to deceive. You would, therefore, be mutually unhappy; for it is ever the custom of the censorious to err on the unfavourable side, and thence it too often happens that circumstances, viewed thro' a false medium rather than their true light, are often condemned, where, perhaps, if properly considered, they might deserve some degree of praise.

I think

I think I have endeavoured to point out every inconvenience most likely to ensue, without reserve; and as I have applied the scourge, it is but fit I should next pour in the healing balm, and deduce, if possible, some consolation for my friend.

You have already had time for serious reflection, ere you come to the determination of revealing your sentiments to her ladyship. If you find it absolutely impossible to overcome this unfortunate prepossession, the sooner you enter on the affair the better; as you can want no farther acquaintance with the sentiments of her mind. If she becomes yours, I will hope her principles will secure her virtue, and her gratitude will ensure your comfort.

You will excuse the apparent severity of some of my expressions, believing

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believing that friendship alone could induce me to use them.

I am, dear Sir William, yours most faithfully,

STANMORE.

You have already had time for serious reflection, ere you come to the determination of revealing your sentiments to her ladyship. If you find it absolutely impossible to overcome this unfortunate opposition, the sooner you enter on the affair the better; as you can want no farther acquaintance with the sentiments of her mind. If she becomes yours, I will hope her principles will secure her virtue, and her gratitude will ensure your comfort.

You will excuse the apparent levity of my expressions, believing

L. E. T.

LETTER XI.

LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM TO MISS
GORDON.

I DEDICATE every leisure hour to my Maria, and shall esteem myself sufficiently repaid, if I can prove, in the smallest degree, entertaining. But you must remember it is the recital of a weak mortal; and, therefore, to her conduct and her faults, be blind from friendship, and considerate from charity. It is become necessary for me to bespeak your consideration; for, alas! my imprudence has laid me but too liable to your censure; but I will
open

open my whole heart to you, and seek not to extenuate my folly.

Already have I too much reason to regret my yielding to the solicitations of those who were *not* my friends to become a card-player. As I have heretofore told you, when first I sat down I was totally indifferent about it; but it got hold of me before I was aware, and *liking* took place of indifference. The run of ill-luck which I have had, only served to make me more eager. I nearly became as interested, and almost as avaricious, as any that I played with.

We had a party last night at home, and I was stript of almost all my money; my purse being soon emptied, I was obliged to have recourse to the note given me by Sir William. Alas! the sight of it brought remorse and reproof, and when I presented it

to

to the Lady Sandford, who had been the winner, my whole frame was so agitated, I could scarce hold my hand steady; the whole *set*, however, were too deeply engaged to pay any attention to me, except Sir James Harrill, who saw and attributed my emotions to ill-luck. He was lavish in the offers of his purse; you may be certain I was as positive in my refusal. I determined not to run in debt, and it would have been scandalous to have borrowed of strangers while under my sister's roof; though, I believe, her ladyship has as much occasion for, and is as little willing to part with, her money, as any one can be. Mr. Foster would, I dare say, lend his assistance, were I to request it, but I cannot bear the idea of being under *pecuniary* obligations to this family. The worthy Sir William! shame and confusion will never suffer me to apply to; and though I shall soon be of age, and may
receive

receive my fortune; yet what I can I expect if I continue; slender as it is, to dissipate it thus idly.

Sir William was of this odious party, for so it proved to me, but soon left us, though *not before* I was seated at a card-table. I fancied he regarded me with such scrutinizing eyes, I hardly dared to lift up *mine* lest they should encounter *his*. The evening concluded with my having lost every thing I possessed. I passed a sleepless night, and arose with the full determination never again to be guilty of the like imprudence.

As I was sitting alone in my dressing-room the next morning, wholly absorbed in my own unpleasant reflections, in came Lord B——, pale, disordered, and even worse than myself. I enquired eagerly the cause of his apparent distress, he made me no answer
for

for some time, but continued walking up and down the room, his arms folded, and seemingly in great agitation; at length flinging himself into a chair, Cursed infatuation, damned luck, that I ever pursues me, said he; you, Lucy, may form *some* judgment of what I feel, as you were, if I mistake not, devilishly *taken in* yourself last night. I own, replied I, your lordship's conjectures are but too well founded; but I hope to repair my fault, by a strict observance of the resolution I before had not stability sufficient to keep. You are a fool then for your pains, said he, it is but a mere trifle you make such a rout about, and may easily be repaired, as you have nothing to do but to apply to old Square-toes; but I have no way left to extricate myself; I am ruined. There is but one alternative, cried he, striking his forehead, and that is *dreadful* indeed. Terrified at his manner, and at the shocking hint

he

he had given, I conjured him to calm his spirits, and said every thing I could think of likely to have that effect. It is to no purpose, said he, your talking, Lucy; if you wish to preserve me you may, it is in *your* power to relieve my difficulties. O! name in what I can be serviceable to your lordship, cried I, and never doubt my readiness. You are a good girl, Lucy, said he, but I fear what I have to propose will be very disagreeable to you; it will be needless to say I have lost considerably, and there are two thousand pounds which *must* be paid to-morrow, or I shall never be able to appear again in public; it is a debt of honour, and there is no evading it. You know, continued he, the regard Sir James has for you; he is acquainted with the sum I am so much distressed for; he will undertake to raise it for me, if I can promise him a favourable reception upon a subject *you* may easily guess.

gues. If that, my lord, said I, is the way I am to assist you, you were right in your apprehensions of its being disagreeable, as I never can consent to sacrifice my peace for ever, which I most certainly should, by a connection with a man I *never can like*. Since then, returned his lordship, you are so much averse to that measure, there is *another* which will do as well; and which, if *you* will promise to comply with, I engage never to urge you on the subject of Harrill; only, as I gave him my word to obtain an audience for him, I must desire you will just hear what he has to say, and you can then dismiss him at once. Glad to be rid of his importunity at any rate, I promised to comply with the other proposal, if it was any way possible.

After a great deal of circumlocution, he told me it was to beg I would sign a deed of security for two thousand pounds,

pounds, as a gentleman of his acquaintance would lend him the money if I would sign a bond for the payment of it; for, as I was just of age, he should not fear the risk. I was astonished, and asked him how he could think of such a thing? And that I could by no means consent to do it without previously consulting Sir William; but he endeavoured, by every argument he could think of, to induce my compliance; declaring it was only a matter of form, that I might be assured I should never have any trouble or inconvenience from it, and entreated I would not acquaint Sir William at all with the affair, as he was the last person he would wish to know it. And added, if I would not comply he must be under the necessity of mortgaging Belmont, which would be a very great disgrace, and give him a great deal of pain on account of the uneasiness it would occasion my mother, were she

to be made acquainted with it: and Beville, continued he, is so pressing for the share I am indebted to him, that it is impossible for me to *appear* without I can pay the money. Unable to bear the mortifying circumstances he mentioned, I reluctantly complied, and the *gentleman*, who I doubt not had been *previously* engaged, presently made his appearance, and, with a trembling hand, I signed the paper. Never did I see any one whose looks served more to belie the perverted appellation of *gentleman*; he certainly was a Jew money-lender. His lordship never left me for a moment till the business was concluded, fearing, I suppose, I should retract.

Lady Mary, I have some idea, was *concerned* in it, though she *affected* not to know any thing of the matter.

I had

I had not much reason to boast of his brotherly affection, since it is *now* but too evident interest alone was the reason of the change in his behaviour ; however, I *hope* I need not doubt his honour, for surely he would not seek to deprive his sister of the small pittance she has to depend on.

Shall I confess that the fear of a mortgage, and Beville's being a party concerned, were the *principal* inducements for me to comply. I could not bear the world should know the poverty of the family ; and particularly Beville, whom I flatter myself, from the uncommon attention he pays me, will become seriously attached ; sure I can read his approbation in his speaking eyes.

After what I have just written, it would be absurd to deny that he has made an impression on my too susceptible

tible heart. *His* fortune is very circumscribed, but if he can overlook the smallness of *mine*, that with me would be no objection. Convinced as I am, that a very moderate competence with the man of one's choice, is infinitely preferable to riches without happiness. Sweet is the union between two young persons of susceptible minds, unswayed by interest, and unembittered by the disappointments and anxious cares of love : all is happiness and pleasing expectation, the way is strewn with roses, and not a thorn conceals itself to wound the unsuspecting under the fair disguise. O ! may I find it so. If Beville loves, every other consideration will be lost in the sweet delirium. At present my mind is infinitely harassed ; the deceptious part I have been guilty of towards Sir William, serves not a little to encrease it. He could not but perceive the cloud which has of late spread itself over my brow ; and,

in

in the most soothing accents, intreated me to have no reserve to him, to consider him as my Mentor, and unboſom myſelf without reſerve upon every occaſion that required counſel or aſſiſtance. I was, however, obliged to tell him the alteration of hours, I believed, affected my health, as there was no other cauſe. He ſhook his head in ſeeming diſbelief. He cannot, however, entertain an idea of my imprudence. He is now at Roſebury, his health being too indifferent to permit his longer ſtay in town. Muſt I own, I no longer ſee him with the accuſtomed pleaſure; ſenſible as I am that I do not deſerve his kindneſs, it ſeems to reproach me for my duplicity. Pity, my Maria, your dejected, but nevertheless affectionate,

LUCY LESSINGHAM.

L E T-

LETTER XII.

SIR WILLIAM ARLINGTON TO LADY
LUCY LESSINGHAM.

I SHOULD be unworthy the character
I wish to maintain, if my pen was to
lie dormant, while I am sensible of the
unhappy predilection your ladyship has
discovered for gaming. Start not at
the sound, but the observations I made
on your agitation, on Thursday even-
ing, too fully convince me of the
unpleasing truth. The visible dejection
of spirits you labour under, which,
notwithstanding your endeavours to
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hide, *will not* be hid from the penetrating eyes of friendship, serves likewise to convince me you have been unsuccessful. Play, under proper restrictions, which, however, in this *polite age* can never take place, may not be altogether so prejudicial to the morals of those who engage in it for *trifling sums*. Your ladyship has not found it always practicable to follow your own inclinations; as, in the first instance, I flatter myself you were persuaded to play *against* your inclinations; and, in the second, for a much larger stake than your discretion would have dictated. The triumphant joy that sparkled in your eye when success crowned your endeavours, and the chagrin painted on every feature upon a reverse of fortune, plainly indicated you were not *commonly* interested in the game. You being a party so deeply concerned, could not discover the same appearance of joy and triumph in the

coun-

countenances of those you played with; nor, had you made the observation, would you have guessed the cause. It has been said, by those who will say any thing to carry on an argument which cannot be supported by reason, that cards prevent company from falling into topics of scandal. It is a scandal to human nature that it should want such a resource from so hateful and so detested a vice; but be it so, it can only be while the sum played for is of too trifling a concern to excite the anxiety which avaricious minds experience; and every one is more or less avaricious, who give up their time to cards. Whatever is licentious in men, becomes so in a tenfold degree in your sex: the passionate exclamation, the half-uttered imprecation, and the gloomy pallidness of the losing gamester, ill accords with female delicacy. But the evil does not rest here; when a woman has been unwarily drawn in

to lose larger sums than her allowance can defray, how are they to be discharged? Alas! there is only *one way*, and her honour too frequently falls a sacrifice to her extravagant folly; at least, she is always suspected. To you, my lady, I trust I need make no comment, nor urge any thing farther to deter you from so pernicious a practice as gaming. Suspect those who would induce you to play; and remember, acquiescence in matters which are hurtful, both to our principles and constitution, is a weakness; for obedience to the will of those who seek to seduce us from the right road, is not a virtue, but a reprehensible participation of our leader's faults.

I have enclosed a *bill* to prevent any inconvenience that may have arisen from your *foible*; and now, let me hope, if there is any *other cause* to interrupt your tranquillity, you will no longer

longer withhold the communication of it from a guardian, who is not only disposed to contribute all in his power towards removing it, but will prove to you a pitying friend rather than an austere judge. Fear not then, my dear Lady Lucy, to repose a confidence in me. Would you not, if afflicted with any bodily complaint, send for a physician of whose skill you had an opinion? But could he apply the proper remedies unless you described to him the symptoms of that complaint? Your sensibility will draw the inference; and let me entreat you not to suffer idle scruples to interfere with your happiness. Has love already made an interest in your ladyship's bosom? Or do you find, that smooth and inviting as are the promises of pleasure to a youthful imagination, they are deceitful? Alas! my lady, smiling and beautiful is her countenance,

nance, but at length it *will* change to haggard looks and disgusting deformity.

“ Confide not in the flattering snare
 “ Which pleasure spreads to lure thee to her
 “ gate ;
 “ In her soft court conceal’d, pale want and
 “ care,
 “ And keen remorse, await.”

Too often does her flowery paths attract our attention, and captivate our senses ; but, on a nearer approach, we find the roses fade, the joyous day is at an end, and instead of arriving at that happiness we vainly imagined, we find ourselves bewildered and forlorn amidst inextricable mazes. And

“ What is there here to fill these vast desires ?
 “ Should fancy all her dazzling scenes display,
 “ Our wishes unconfin’d would wander still.”

I shall continue this week at Rosebury, and hope to be favoured with a letter from my amiable ward ; as,
 perhaps,

perhaps, it will less hurt her delicacy to disclose her uneasiness (should she labour under any) by writing than in any other mode.

Adieu, my dear Lady Lucy, may I ever be enabled to give you good counsel, and may you be disposed to follow it. I can only *design* it beneficial, you may *make* it so.

W. ARLINGTON.

LETTER XIII.

LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM TO SIR
WILLIAM ARLINGTON.

IT is happy for me, if my actions have hitherto stood so much in my favour, as to make any return for the obligations I am unable to express; believe me, my heart overflows with a grateful sense of the unmerited benefits. I have only to regret, I did not, on *every* occasion, have recourse to my honoured guardian, rather than follow the dictates of my own inexperience, or the persuasions of folly; but, as a
small

small atonement, I will no longer hide from him my anxiety. Justly am I subject to his displeasure ; I have wronged the most generous of men, by distrusting the benevolence of his heart ; I have turned away, regardless of his gentle admonitions, and brought difficulties on myself, by acting without his aid and counsel. The guardian of my childhood, the guide of my inexperienced youth ; he has been more than a father to me, and never was trust discharged with greater tenderness and fidelity. While I was entering into the world, under his conduct and protection, I have repaid him with neglect.

“ Yet I'll look up———

“ My fault is past ; but oh ! what form of prayer

“ Can serve my turn ! t'obtain his pardon.”

Believe me, my dear Sir William, ere your letter came, I had abjured those detested bits of painted paper

E 5

which

which had caused me so much uneasiness; determined no longer to be biassed by the opinion of those I had but too much reason to despise. No! let me be singular; let me be unpolite; let me be *unfashionably good*, if I can but keep my peace, and justify my own conscience; let me inviolably observe the rules of truth and justice; and let my heart be open to the inspection of my revered monitor. It shall be laid bare to his view, nor will I seek to extenuate my faults; but let my youth plead for the one, my affection for the other; and may my sorrow and contrition expiate *both*.

Persuaded into an act that my judgment condemned, it has lain heavy at my heart; but if I was unable to resist the persuasions of strangers to sit down to a card-table, how could I withstand the earnest entreaties of Lord B——, to save him, as he said, from ruin?

fraternal

fraternal affection forbade my refusal. The horrid thought of being instrumental to his destruction, to his rushing into the presence of his Maker "with all his imperfections on his head," overcame every lesser consideration, and I was induced to become security for him for two thousand pounds, as on that condition he could procure it. He has promised, most seriously, that I shall never be called upon for the payment of it; he was deeply involved, and at the time knew no way to extricate himself, as his creditors were insisting on immediate payment; and he asked it of me, to avoid the disgrace and painful reflections a mortgage on Belmont must occasion, which would have been the unavoidable consequence of my refusal; and he particularly requested *you* might not be acquainted with the affair, as the self-conviction he endured was sufficient, without the reproofs he but too justly merited.

merited. Thus, my dear Sir William, I have, at your command, laid before you all my troubles ; trusting to your benevolence for that pardon which, like the Almighty Father of mercies, you will grant to every sorrowing penitent.

“ Hail holy virtue ! Come thou heavenly guest !
 “ Come fix thy pleasing empire in my breast !
 “ I ll tread thy paths, and by thy union rise,
 “ *Daring* to emulate the good and wise.”

Excuse, my dear sir, this apostrophe ; and believe that I am, with the sincerest respect and esteem,

Your ever *obliged*,

LUCY LESSINGHAM.

LET-

LETTER XIV.

LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM TO MISS
GORDON.

I KNOW not, my dearest Maria, how it is, but I cannot help thinking that we are not formed to taste happiness in this world ; at least those who are of a reflective turn. We find a chasm, an aching void in the midst of our gayest pursuits ; and those amusements we pursue with the greatest avidity, seldom or never answer our high-raised expectations. I am led into these reflections by my own situation. It is impossible

possible to describe the joy and pleasure with which I anticipated my journey to town; and the *gout* that I entered into every pleasurable scheme with, plainly evinced *London* to be the dear theatre where I expected to find my happiness. I will not say I have been wholly disappointed; but I find not the felicity I concluded to be so certain. My folly, however, I must own, was the first interruption to it; for, had I not been prevailed on to *play*, I had spared myself infinite regret. And, shameful to relate, though every thing loudly demanded my relinquishing *cards*, I could not do it without being sensibly mortified; even now, when I stand near a card-table, I feel some difficulty to suppress the inclination I still feel for them; but I will adhere to my resolution; I will not abuse the kindness of Sir William, by precipitating into those errors he has warned me of. Thank heaven! he is

now

now acquainted with the affair of Lord B——. I could not summons courage to tell him, but I wrote. I will not repay his goodness with ingratitude: how kindly did he write, enclosing a bank note for an hundred pounds, lest my folly should have brought with it its *usual* concomitant *distress*; I have not seen him since, but I trust I have nothing to fear. My mind is, in some measure, rid of the intolerable weight that pressed it so heavily; and, though I am quite in a moralizing strain, I feel much happier than when I last wrote. Yet I am half ready sometimes to exclaim,

“Hence vain deluding joys!

“The brood of folly, without father bred.”

I must, however, alter my style, and assume a sprightlier theme, or you will be apt to conclude some *disappointment* has occasioned these unusual grave airs; but not so, my dear, I have gained

gained a *lover* rather than lost an *admirer*. Sir James has taken an opportunity to make a formal declaration. Lady Mary, I believe, *purposely* absented herself. He is so truly disagreeable in my eyes, I had hardly patience to hear his fine harangue. When he paused to take breath, I seized the moment to tell him, I was much indebted to him for the distinguished compliment he had paid me, but must say he would add infinitely to the obligation by never again mentioning the subject; though I respected him as an acquaintance, I must take the liberty of telling him, I did not *feel* it in my power to have that esteem for him so necessary, in my estimation, to render the married life at all happy. He was apparently chagrined, and continued silent; but I think I could perceive in the haughty turn of his features, that his silence arose more from *pique* than *love*. I suppose he hardly expected
such

such a flat denial, considering my slender expectations, though he could not but see his attentions were not pleasing. At length : "Your ladyship, said he, is rather precipitate in your refusal; you give yourself no time to consider the subject." "Tho' I may not have considered it *particularly*, Sir James, returned I, interrupting him, I have considered it generally, sufficient to convince me I can never be happy in an union with a man I cannot love." "Is it then so totally impossible," cried he, "for you, my dear Lady Lucy, to bestow the least regard on me? Am I then a wretch entirely beneath your notice? Believe me, my angel, my whole life shall be devoted to the study of making you happy. Oh! let me read in those sweet averted eyes that you pity me; on my knees I implore your pity, only say you will consider of it; meantime, permit me to make known my wishes to your brother, to
Lady

Lady Mary; let me endeavour to obtain *their* interest." Aware of his art in mentioning them, I instantly returned, "It is Sir William and my revered mother *alone* who are to be applied to. You must excuse me, Sir James, but you may spare yourself the unnecessary trouble of making application for *their* consent, as you will never obtain *mine*. They have too great a regard for my peace to wish to use an undue influence on so serious a subject; and, as the present conversation is very unpleasant to me, you must pardon my wishing you good morning." I immediately quitted the room, notwithstanding his endeavours to detain me, and left him to keep company with himself.

I acquainted Lady Mary on her return with what had passed, and she blamed me excessively for refusing so advantageous, so lucrative an offer;
pre-

preferring easy circumstances to happiness, she could see no obstacle to impede our union. But as I saw a great *many*, I continued steady in my determination. For

“ ’Tis not wealth, ’tis not birth,
 “ Can value to the soul convey;
 “ Minds possess superior worth,
 “ Which chance nor gives nor takes away.
 “ Like the sun true merit shows,
 “ By nature warm, by nature bright;
 “ With inbred flames he nobly glows,
 “ Nor needs the aid of borrow’d light.”

I knew Sir William, from kindness, would countenance my refusal, I therefore was immoveably fixed, proof against all the glittering toys with which they in vain sought to dazzle my understanding, and shake my resolution.

I am afraid my Maria will not give me all the credit I deserve on the occasion, as she will be inclined to believe

lieve a certain prepossession in favour of another was the real cause of my disinterested conduct. I will allow it might have *some* influence; but was my heart totally *unoccupied*, it could never acknowledge Sir James for its lord. I am at a loss what conjectures to form of Beville: the whole tenor of his conduct speaks that he regards me with *more* than *common* attention; and why should he be so assiduous to please unless he loves? But, alas! we are ever *too* ready in believing what we wish. He *seems* to avoid an open declaration, yet the “dial points though it speaks not;” for upon my rallying him the other day about Miss Conway (Lady Mellville’s niece) who, it is reported, entertains a *penchant* for him, and saying, “Captain Beville, why do you let the fair nymph sigh in vain; she is not only esteemed handsome, but is mistress of a large independent fortune; a circumstance few gentle-

gentlemen ever overlook?" He sighed, and pressing my hand, "Oh! Lady Lucy, said he,

"To the sun's morning splendour

"The poor Indian bows;

"But *I* dare not worship

"Where I pay my vows."

I was confused beyond measure, and trembled like an aspin leaf; he spoke in a low voice, and Lady Mary was talking earnestly to Lady Mellville, so that it passed unheeded; but I could scarce recover myself the whole evening. He must observe my emotion, and what can he fear; at least, why does he not try his success? I should not have thought Captain Beville, so much a man of the world, would be so very timid. I am quite at a loss what construction to put on his conduct; my wishes would incline me to decide it favourably, though I know not whether my better judgment would not condemn such a decision.

Write

have confessed to me what you termed your *folly*, and your sorrow for having acted without my concurrence, serves, if possible, to raise my opinion of you; nor could I refuse you my pardon, had your errors been of a much larger magnitude. I trust you will now no longer fear reposing a confidence in me ; but remember, unless it is unlimited, there is little probability of my being serviceable to you. I am far from wishing to restrain the dictates of your sensibility or affection ; but, from this ill-placed benevolence, you may deprive yourself of a support, and, perhaps, only encrease the means of Lord B——'s prodigality. I own I cannot entertain the highest respect of his integrity, in seeking to seduce a young creature into an act which he too well knew her friends must condemn ; and, therefore, he sought to conceal it. I have great reason to fear, though sincerely do I wish my fears may be
 averted

averted, that your ladyship will be the sufferer, and that you will be called upon to pay the security. I would not wound your gentle bosom, but Lord B—— has been guilty of a most unpardonable deception, for, notwithstanding his lordship's assertions to the contrary, it is too true that Belmont is mortgaged for its chief, if not its full value. Indeed, were not that the case, I could not have believed he would have sought to take advantage of your unsuspecting nature, or endeavoured to frighten his sister to become security to an usurer (for such I make no doubt the person who procured the money was) for the support of his extravagance. The caution of age is scarce sufficient to guard us from becoming a prey to designing people; how then should the unwary youth avoid their arts? I pity, but I do not blame you, my beloved ward; nor do I wonder at the many deviations that so frequent-

ly occur, since it but too often happens, the most specious appearance, the smile, the ready promise, and all the grimace of affected sincerity, serves only to conceal the dark, designing, unfeeling villain; whilst, perhaps, on the other hand, under a plain garb and simple manners, we may meet good sense, benevolence, and sensibility. It is a bitter reflection, that merit is left to languish in obscurity, while villainy flourishes; but it is only for a time; and, were every other proof unavailable, must, in the end, serve to convince even an Atheist that there is a world beyond this, where we must look for a reward of our sufferings.

- “ The ways of heaven are dark and intricate :
- “ Puzzled in mazes, and perplex'd in error !
- “ Our understanding traces them in vain,
- “ Lost and bewilder'd in the fruitless search ;
- “ Nor sees with how much art the windings run ;
- “ Nor where the regular confusion ends.

Go on then, my dear Lady Lucy,
pursue the road to virtue; and be as-
sured, however rugged the path, you
will one day arrive at the goal, and find
her, O! how lovely!

WM. ARLINGTON.

F 2

LET-

LETTER XVI.

MISS GORDON TO LADY LUCY LES-
SINGHAM.

IN pure civility to your ladyship, I have forbore pestering you with my letters; but when called upon, I immediately obey the pleasing summons. I sincerely wish I possessed abilities to constitute a good adviser, but as I do not, I trust to your friendship to let the intention demonstrate the act.

Shall I own I cannot, I do not altogether approve of Captain Beville's conduct; he is not, I dare venture to affirm,

affirm, ignorant of his attractions, of the effect they produce, nor do I believe he can be insensible to the flattering light in which you view him; but beware! my dear Lady Lucy, beware!

“ When once love’s subtle poison gains
 “ A passage to the female breast;
 “ Like light’ning rushing thro’ the veins,
 “ Each wish and every thought possess.
 “ To heal the pangs our minds endure
 “ Reason, in vain, her skill applies;
 “ Nought can afford the heart a cure,
 “ But what is pleasing to the eyes.”

I tremble lest your peace becomes the sacrifice of your sensibility, for you know not the pain it is to extirpate from our affections an object so every way formed to create them. I will hope, however, you are not quite so far gone in the tender passion, but that, with reason’s aid, you may be able to recal your wandering heart to its duty,

or to fix it with some one who will repay with his own; for

“ Sweet is the love that meets return.”

Captain Beville lessens himself infinitely in my estimation by his conduct. How dishonourable a part is that man acting, who seeks to gain the esteem of an amiable young creature, to answer no other purpose than the gratification of his vanity, or the amusement of an idle hour! Such men ought to be shunned, despised, and treated in the most contemptible manner, since they seek to rob us of our dearest property, *our peace of mind*. I hope Mr. Beville may not be deserving this opinion, yet I am much at a loss to conceive what deters him from coming to an explicit declaration; as, I suppose, he is already, from report, acquainted with your fortune, &c. It is, to me, an inexplicable mystery. However, regard him not, my sweet friend; the surest

surest way to mortify his vanity will be, by a steady, uniform, cool behaviour; *particular* coldness would appear as tho' you were piqued at something; and, I dare believe, his penetration sufficient to enable him to divine at what, and to know we never regret our disappointment, except we have flattered ourselves with pleasing expectations: behave commonly polite, but let him see you receive his attentions with a frigid indifference, and view him in no better light than a mere *dangler*.

" A creature born to teaze and vex,

" A thing made only to admire;

" Without one wish, or warm desire.

" His love is sed by intuition,

" And satisfied without fruition;

" *Dangling*, content with small regard,

" Like virtue,—is its own reward.

And may that reward be, mortification to his vanity, and despair to his hopes.

Pray remember me particularly to Sir William, and believe me, my dear

F 4

Lady

Lady Lucy, that next to the happiness of your company, stands the favour of a letter from you, in the catalogue of pleasures belonging to your

MARIA GORDON.

My aunt and cousin reciprocate civilities.

LET-

L E T T E R X V I I .

CAPTAIN STUART TO CAPTAIN BEVILLE.

I AM not altogether surpris'd at your silence, Beville, though I flattered myself the observance a man of honour ever pays to his word, would have been sufficient to influence your conduct, without my reminding you I have received but one letter from you since you left F——, notwithstanding you repeatedly assured me how frequently you would charge the postman with your dispatches. Your negligence is highly censurable, well knowing, ex-

F 5

clusive

elusive of the entertainment, how beneficial must be your observations on men, manners, and things, to your rusticated friend. I am well aware of the high value you put on your time, you who are in the full career of improvement, with all the advantages of useful and ornamental science in full prospect before you ; in such a dazzling and seducing situation, to bestow five minutes on an old friend, surely challenges his warmest acknowledgments, but ought not to be impertinently expected too often.

Amidst all your acquirements, are you casuist enough to inform me, how it happens that we are generally disappointed in our most favourite wishes, and that those very points we have taken such infinite pains to attain, seldom or never prove, what, at a more distant period, we imagined to be so exquisite; is it because when we gain full
pos-

possession, and have nothing farther to hope, that it loses its value ; “ Palls upon the sense, and sickens in the eye ? ” Or is it because man is so variable a creature he is never satisfied ? ever restless, and seeking after those pleasures which are beyond his reach ; but no sooner does he obtain the completion of his wishes, though obtained with the utmost difficulty, than he regards the prize with a jaundice eye, and foolishly wonders what chimerical whim induced him to believe it of such estimation. I myself serve to illustrate my argument : three months ago I believed I should arrive at the summit of my wishes, could I gain Nancy ; that, with dividing my time between the chace, our brother officers, and her, I should pass the gloomy winter-months, although in a country town, with no small degree of satisfaction ; in her company I placed my chief delight, thinking I should find her the solace of
all

all my cares and fatigues; I really loved her, and, poor girl, I believe she returns my affection with the utmost sincerity, yet I am not happy; she is docile, and ever ready to comply with every thing I propose, but her novelty is at an end, and with it, I believe, the poignancy of my love. I know not how to forsake her, for, I am persuaded, but for me she would have remained virtuous, and had not her heart proved a traitor, she would have been deaf to my solicitations.

- “ School’d in the science of love’s mazy wiles,
- “ I cloath’d each feature with affected scorn;
- “ I spoke of jealous doubts and fickle smiles,
- “ And feigning left her anxious and forlorn.
- “ Then, while the fancy’d rage alarm’d her care,
- “ Warm to deny, and zealous to disprove;
- “ I bade my words their wonted softness wear,
- “ And seiz’d the minute of returning love.”

It is true I tried every art to seduce her: and now it would certainly kill her with grief, were she to perceive my
af-

affection, which I swore would exist "till time should be no more," was vanished and fled. She is all simplicity, without the least tincture of art or guile; but did she possess a little more variety, and such is human nature, was she perhaps capricious, whimsical, and even tyrannical, she might rivet those chains her soft compliance is unable to secure. I will never be such a villain to desert her unsupported; but what I shall do with her when our regiment marches, I am yet at a loss to determine; I believe she would be willing to follow me with a knapsack, even to the end of the world. I sometimes absolutely wish I could be constant, but our inclinations are not always in our power. I am not, however, such an unfeeling fellow as you, Beville; I cannot, unmoved, behold the distress I occasion, while you esteem women in no better light than boys do kittens, who play with them for their amusement,

110 DISINTERESTED LOVE; OR,

ment, but discard them the instant they grow troublesome. You must pardon my rough simile; you know I never entirely approved your sentiments, and if many a poor girl had known you as well as I do, you would not have had half the number of conquests to boast. You certainly will not have the audacity to attempt any of your female friends in town; if you should, that you may meet with no success, is the sincere wish of your friend,

C. STUART.

LET-

LETTER XVIII.

CAPTAIN BEVILLE TO CAPTAIN STUART.

INDEED, my dear Stuart, you do not do me justice : that I have been a little negligent I confess ; but as to my forgetting you, believe me, appearances only are against me. Upon my soul, in this gay town, there is no time for reflexion, not a moment to spare from *pleasure*; and the current of dissipation is so powerful it whirls one along with the stream, I had almost said *sometimes* against inclination.

“Awake

- " Awake at noon, or scarce so soon,
 " Sipping tea—half asleep;
 " Curse the vapours—reach the papers.
 " What's the opera? damn the play—
 " Air my boots; I think I'll ride—
 " Tho' rot it, no, it stirs one so,
 " I'll walk to-day.——
 " Call at Betty's—what's the news?
 " A divorce they say—Have you pines to day?
 " Yes, your Honour—'tis Lady J—and Colonel
 " Truck.
 " Hah! some ice, I thought as much—
 " What! and nothing more, 'tis a monst'rous
 " bore.
 " I must go to Issacher's, the Jew.—
 " Lost at Brookes—deep at play;
 " Issacher's debt, at Faro set,
 " Till half alive we cut at five.
 " And this is a *petite maitre's* day.

A damned *time*-portrait, Charles,
 and where do you find one moment
 out of this fine adjustment to bestow
 on absent friends, or even absent loves;
 but they, poor dears, would stand a
 miserable chance, for the variety of
 new ones I every where meet, would
 in-

infallibly drive out all recollection of the old ones.

Thou art a splenetic mortal, and were I not, for all your malice, a very good humoured fellow, faith, let me tell you, what with your irony and your metaphors, I should not make the *re-tort courteous*; but I know your value, notwithstanding your rusty incrustations, and it would be devilish hard, if among my innumerable bad qualities I had not a few good ones sprinkled here and there; one in particular let me remind you of, that tho' *properly* tenacious, I never take offence where it is not meant.

I was so excessively diverted with an adventure I met with this morning I cannot forbear relating it. I have hardly been able to compose my risible faculties ever since; it seems paradoxical to assert it was sacredly ludicrous.

I was

I was passing by St. George's, Hanover-square, this morning, when I perceived a great concourse of people of the lower sort endeavouring to force their way into the church, in spite of the opposition they met with from the beadles, &c. and a confused noise seemed to issue from within. My curiosity being excited, I went in, expecting to see some young thing sacrificed to an old fellow against her will, at least something extraordinary; and so, indeed, it was. A marriage had just taken place between a Captain H——, an Irishman, six feet two inches in height, about twenty five years of age, of a noble family, but no cash; and an old lady of seventy-seven, a woman of fortune, and a widow. All sorts and conditions of people had attended them to church; the low folks crowded on her, and had like to have thrown her down, four basket-women had got into the pulpit, ladies of equal cha-

character into the desk and the clerk's place, all distinctions were confounded, and in that manner the ceremony was performed. When over, instead of congratulating the bride, they called her all manner of names, and insulted her in such a manner as brought forth the clergyman who had married her; he threatened them, talked about the bishop, and what he would do if they did not disperse; but to no purpose. They followed her out of church, would not let her go home, and at last, with infinite difficulty, the officer who gave her away got her to a friend's house; the bridegroom, all this time, hiding himself in the belfry, and occasionally peeping a bit of his head out.

I must own, I think, they richly deserved the treatment they met with; I scarcely know which merited the most censure: on the side of the superannuated old tabby it was founded on a most

un-

unpardonable, ridiculous, absurd passion; she will meet the just reward of her folly, for it is utterly impossible for him ever to live with her; and as the money must have been his sole object, he will of course let her have little enough of that. As to the man, if he had but the pay of a *private*, he deserves to be drummed out of his regiment for the shameful sacrifice he has made of himself.

My affairs seem at present tolerably en train, we have had a little bon souper, and I have been pretty successful. Lord B—— lost considerably; he generally does, and his ill success only renders him the more eager: he will soon ruin himself. Lady Lucy is a divine creature, had she a fortune, I should be half inclined to play the fool and marry; her's, however, is too—too slender to tempt me. I must have a wife whose fortune will support me, and

and not be obliged to drudge for her and a parcel of those household plagues called *brats*. There is a Miss Conway I meet often in their parties, who is mistress of twenty thousand pounds, and *there*, I believe, my modesty stands intirely in my way, or fame greatly belies her divinityship; but I am nice, I do not admire those ready-willing fair ones, who seem as if they would fall into your arms without asking. Mrs. Peachum gave her daughter excellent advice, for, indeed, “keeping men off, is keeping them on;” and if this maxim was more attended to, the soft souls would find their account in it. Sir James has made his proposals to her ladyship, and, oh! dire to tell, is absolutely rejected; he feels it in a very piquant manner, as every man must; he even goes so far as to say *I* am the cause, but he may be quite easy, as it is impossible for me to be serious there: yet I admire Lady Lucy, I cannot help
at-

attending to her, and believe I am sometimes rather too warm in my praises; and the distinction she seems to pay me induces me to repeat them. I was cursed silly the other night, I had like to have overshot the mark, and scarce knew how to recede; I went farther than I ever intended. I prefer her infinitely to the flirting Miss Conway, who ogles and stares to very little purpose, yet it is flattering to be distinguished by a fine woman, though, between the *two*, my situation is awkward; had each an equal fortune I should not hesitate. I am charmed with the softness and delicacy of Lady Lucy; she has already given up cards, being unsuccessful, I believe, was her reason, her fortune not allowing of any extravagance, and she shewed her prudence in so doing. Old Arlington, her guardian, is always filling her head with his antiquated notions, and she pays an implicit obedience to all he says;

says; would he come down *properly*, something might be thought of; her mother can do nothing, and living, or more properly starving, upon love, would not at all suit my disposition; even *you* have found its instability in three months, I never then can think of engaging "till death us do part."

Adieu, I am going to meet my charmer at the opera.

Yours,

HENRY BEVILLE.

LET-

LETTER XIX.

LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM TO MISS
GORDON.

MANY thanks are due to my Maria for her kind letter, and to testify my approbation of it, I endeavoured to follow her advice. I avoided Beville, and even permitted Sir James to be my escort in public, rather than him. Had you seen his pensive looks, his well-affected sighs, *you* could not have remained obdurate; alas! *my* heart too soon yielded to the soft impulse, but still I determined to keep up
the

the appearance of *indifference*, happy for me had it been real, for

“ At her approach see hope, see fear,
 “ See expectation fly ;
 “ With disappointment in the rear,
 “ Which blasts the promis’d joy.”

Sir James exulted, and Beville (I imagine to mortify me) turned all his attention to Miss Conway, who received it with every mark of approbation. He danced with her the other evening at Almack’s, I was in the same set ; unable to bear so mortifying a scene, I pleaded a violent pain in my head, and sat down ; but the pain, alas ! was in my heart. Sir James, who was my partner, was distressed beyond measure, and doubly officious, procuring me water, smelling-bottles, and I know not what, little considering how ineffectual they would be to heal “ the bosom’s keen smart ;” he entreated me to go into the tea-room, as he feared the

warmth of the ball-room was too much for me ; but I was riveted to the spot, nor had I power to move. At the end of the dance, Miss Conway came up with the most exulting air, and Beville with her : “ What, Lady Lucy sitting still, said she, surely this is very unusual ; I always thought your ladyship was remarkably fond of dancing.” “ Yes, madam, added Beville, but Lady Lucy may have other favourite amusements ; the heat is disagreeable, and she wisely prefers a *tête a tête* with Sir James.” “ You are exceedingly mistaken, interrupted I, with quickness, I sat down because I was unwell.” “ O! my dear, returned Miss Conway, pray make no apologies, we will not disturb you, I am sorry we have *already* done it ; but come, Beville, the *violent* heat shall not prevent you and I from taking another dance.” And away the unfeeling girl went, Beville of course following her. I *fancied* he
re-

regarded me with an eye of pity, but, perhaps, it was *only* fancy; he turned away his eyes immediately on their meeting mine.

I was so spiritless, so fatigued, and so provoked, that I begged Sir James would see for Lady Mary's chair, as I would borrow that and go home. The moment I was seated in it I could not help giving vent to my tears, which in some degree relieved my full heart. On my stopping at home, I was not altogether so much surprized to see Sir James ready to hand me out, tho' indeed I never gave myself the trouble to think about him. I apologized for taking him from the assembly at so early an hour, and entreated he would return without delay. "I beg your ladyship will not mention it, said he, it is not my intention to return there any more to-night, and if you will allow me to remain five minutes in your

room, till I have the satisfaction of finding you perfectly recovered, I should esteem it a favour." I could not deny him, and he followed me up stairs. "I am very sorry I have been the means of spoiling your dance this evening, Sir James, said I, you were very unfortunate in your choice of a partner. Take my advice," continued I, affecting an air of raillery to conceal my anguish, "return without loss of time, it is yet early, and you may perhaps meet with a second partner, sprightly enough to recompence you for the stupidity of the first." "Oh! Lady Lucy, cried he, how can you sport with my feelings! Can you imagine I can receive pleasure in dancing with another, while my heart is devoted to you alone? your indisposition has made me miserable, since it has opened my eyes to what, indeed, upon a retrospect, had I not been blind, I might have perceived ere now. Be
not

not offended at my temerity, I cannot be insensible to your partiality for Beville, it was this night too evident for me to be mistaken; I will not say your ladyship's refusal of me was entirely in consequence of this, as I might not possess merit sufficient to make an impression on you. In him I now see the barrier of all my hopes! I vainly flattered myself with the belief, that in time, my assiduities, my respect, might perhaps have some avail; but, my hopes, my happiness, are too surely at an end: and yet, O! most amiable of women, I cannot see the conflict struggling in your gentle bosom, without feeling every sentiment of pity for you, as well as affection, since I too surely feel, myself, the pangs of disappointed love; it has tied "sharp toothed misery like a vulture to my heart."

Think, my Maria, what I must feel at this discovery of my weakness, and

to be told of it so plainly, what could I say ? it was almost in vain to disown it, my tears confessed the unhappy secret. “ You distress me, Sir James, infinitely, said I, as soon as I could articulate ; I would not give pain willingly to any being, much less to one who professes a particular regard for me. Our affections are not to be commanded, or I might, perhaps, wish it were possible for me to bestow *mine* where they would meet with so generous a return. Let me, however, again entreat you to be silent on this subject ; I respect you as a friend, but I cannot view you in any other light ; it is altogether fruitless to urge me, and can answer no other purpose than giving pain to both. You must permit me to say your mention of Mr. Beville is not pleasing ; believe me you are mistaken, my indisposition was solely owing to the excessive heat, as Mr. Beville’s dancing with Miss Conway could not be of any manner of

con-

consequence to me, he is free to chuse, and I had not the smallest wish to influence his choice, or that he should fix on me." "Pardon my disbelief, my dear Lady Lucy, returned Sir James, I would not willingly give offence to your delicacy, for my own sake I would be blind, but I cannot, it is indeed too plain. Fear not, however, continued he, I shall boast of the secret I have discovered, you may safely confide in my honour, and rest satisfied it shall remain inviolable; yet as your heart could not be bestowed on me, I could have wished it had elected one who would have better known the value of the gift than Beville: his fortune too will not suffer him to think of marrying; neither, I believe, has he any intentions." I burst into tears, I could no longer restrain: "Oh! Sir James, sobbed I out, why will you add thus to my distress, believe me I do not love Beville; I was ill before,

and now it is *you* that gives me pain; leave me, let me entreat, I have need of rest, my spirits are quite discomposed, it will indeed be salutary for both, let me beg you to take my advice." "Generous, amiable, Lady Lucy, exclaimed he, may you be happy! may you meet the reward of your merit; but oh! I fear Beville has not a soul capable of doing it justice. I cannot put up a prayer for a rival, yet do I wish you may meet with no cruel disappointment to embitter your happiness." He snatched up his hat, and went down stairs evidently affected. He stopped in the parlour a few minutes, as it were to recover himself, and then I heard him ring the bell to be let out.

I must lay down my tired pen, tomorrow I will resume it; till when, adieu, my dear Maria.

LUCY LESSINGHAM.

LADY

LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM IN CONTI-
NUATION.

AGAIN I take up my pen.—As for me I sat immoveably fixed, and incapable of stirring; in short, I was perfectly overcome with a variety of conflicting passions, pity and esteem for Sir James, love and disappointment, alternately took possession of me.

Fanny had heard I was come home, and besought me to go to bed; I did at last, merely to be quit of her importunities; but oh! to what purpose? Sleep was a stranger to my wearied

eye-lids, my harrassed mind kept me waking. With what truth, with what energy did I repeat,

- “ Hail gentle sleep! tho’ death’s tremendous
 “ form
 “ Resembles thee, I court thy transient smile;
 “ In thy soft arms I’ll shun each storm,
 “ With thee the tearful hour beguile:
 “ Each mortal pleasure dies when thou art fled,
 “ And mightiest princes woo thee to their bed.
 “ In thy sweet mansions freed from every care
 “ We live, and taste the sweetest joys of life;
 “ Tranquillity alone is there,
 “ Perpetual foe to hateful strife;
 “ In thy soft arms we gently seem to die,
 “ And lock’d in them, can death himself defy!”

Lady Mary came into my room on her return, thinking, as I came home so early, I was indisposed, to see how I was; but being in no condition to answer her enquiries, I feigned what I languished for, and believing me to be asleep, she retired softly, saying she would not disturb me. I reasoned myself

self into a tolerable composure by morning, but being very dejected, and really not well, from the hurry my spirits had undergone, I continued in my dressing room all day, making a plea of my indisposition to avoid going out for the present. I have desired it may be carefully concealed from my mother and Sir William, well knowing their anxious fears would presently multiply a trifling cold into a mortal distemper.

Sir James has called twice, and looked very serious, but only enquired after my health in the common way. Were I to be *really* very ill, from this house I should soon wish to remove.

Lady Mary and Mr. Foster, to do them justice, are very obliging; but they are too much engaged in their different pursuits to pay much regard to a sister in affliction. No longer
than

than while health and spirits continue, and the sun of prosperity plays his brightening beams around you ; no longer must you expect to be an object of much attention in the gay world : when sickness and affliction press upon you, all your *boasted* friends, and even relations, run away as if from infection ; for they think not that it is better to go into the “ house of mourning than the house of gladness.”

“ Oh ! friendship, thine’s a sacred flame,
 “ And still my soul pays homage to thy name.”

How do the sympathetic soothing of a *true* friend smooth the pillow, and relieve the aching head, and heart too ; but I must be well, there is to be a brilliant masquerade next week, and I am to go, they will take no denial, “ all the world will be there,” to express myself in the common-place phrase. I have some curiosity, but could, however, suppress it without
 any

any immense difficulty; but the fates have decreed I must make one of the motley groupe.

Adieu, my dear Maria, my next shall contain an account of it, as I know *your* curiosity will be particularly excited. Believe me yours, as usual,

LUCY LESSINGHAM.

LET

LETTER XX.

SIR WILLIAM ARLINGTON TO LADY
LUCY LESSINGHAM.

THE day fast advances when the trust I have taken so much pleasure in executing will be at an end, and my beloved Ward will be at liberty to pursue "what to her seemeth best." That discretion may ever lead her, and prudence be her guide, is my sincerest wish. Tho' I must resign my guardianship, I shall be ever ready, and most happy, can I at any time be of service to your ladyship. The title of guardian
will

will be at an end, and if you still allow me the liberty of occasionally giving my advice, it must be *only* as a friend; and, believe me, you will never find one more sincere and disinterested.

Before I quite relinquish my authority, permit me to propose to you an affair, on which I never till now wished to influence your conduct. Will you not easily guess? It is in behalf of some one who has paid the tribute due to your merit: yes, my lady, it is in behalf of a man who has long loved you with the most ardent affection, but fearful and apprehensive of your not according with his wishes, has never yet dared to disclose his passion. That he *is* deserving of you I cannot say; but that every hour of his life would be employed in endeavouring to gain your esteem, I *may* venture to affirm. If the most unbounded affection, a heart devoted to you, and an ample fortune,
may

may be any incitement, he possesses them. Perhaps, from the energy with which I write, you will be led to believe I shall prove a powerful advocate for my friend: I wish indeed to be so, most earnestly do I wish it; but be assured I will never urge your consent, if it should prove incompatible with your inclination. I have always sought every means to ensure your happiness, and I will not, in this most important affair, lose sight of the idea, though I am almost persuaded to think your acquiescence might secure it. From a strange peculiarity in the man's disposition, he has made a resolution never to marry any woman who is not possessed of an *independent* fortune; and, slender as yours is, he waits till you are become sole mistress of it before he ventures to make his proposals, tho', believe me, it is the last and least consideration; but, from a kind of false delicacy, for I know not what to term it,

it, he will not marry a woman entirely without, lest, I conceive, as the world is busy on every occasion, it should be given out she accepted him *merely* for his fortune, which being, as I have already observed, large, might give rise to such a report from the ill-judging many.

I shall come to town on your birthday, to settle my accounts, and your ladyship will find I have been a faithful steward; I will then unfold to you the particulars of this business. Meantime, begging you will for once oblige me in keeping it secret, I am, my dear Lady Lucy, yours,

W. ARLINGTON.

LET-

LETTER XXI.

LADY LUCY LESSINGHAM TO MISS
GORDON.

I WRITE, my dearest Maria, I cannot but write; I am thrown into new perplexities, and new embarrassments. I congratulated myself with having so effectually put an end to the *hopes* of Sir James, and yet retaining him as a friend; but I will endeavour, if I can sufficiently collect my hurried spirits, to give you the incidents as they arose.

Monday

Monday was the day on which I appeared at the masquerade. I was calm and composed, and if my spirits were not high, they appeared very equal to an impartial observer. There was really more consultation about the dresses we were to appear in, and more anxiety expressed to have them elegant, than there would have been for a seat in Paradise. I wished to be only in a domino, but was not heard; our party was brilliant, and they must appear so. Lady Mary led the van as a Diana, the two Miss Harcourts her attendant nymphs, Lady Mellville as a sultana, and Miss Conway figured away in a rich fancy dress. I must own the generality of people seem only to consult what dress will set their persons off to most advantage, without ever considering whether they are capable of supporting the character they assume. Our gentlemen thought proper to confine their taste to elegant dominos.

No-

Nothing would serve but I must appear as *Hope*. I remonstrated in vain; overcome by their persuasions I consented, thinking the character not altogether unsuitable to the present pensive turn of my disposition, at least it required no great exertion. Behold me, then, arrayed in a sky-blue robe, studded all over with stars of silver, fastened round my waist with an elegant belt, my hair out of powder and flowing, only bound with a string of beautiful pearl, and, to complete the whole, leaning on a silver anchor; in short, to imitate as near as possible the portrait we have so often contemplated. On my entrance I was for some minutes lost in amazement at the medley tribe that surrounded me, as well as struck at the brilliancy of the lights and the elegance of the building, for it was my first *entrée* at the Pantheon. Numberless were my votaries; each supplicating me to be propitious to their wishes,

wishes, and not to prove, as I too often did, delusive. I endeavoured to answer characteristically, but was glad when they took their leave, for their flattery was gross, and their mirth folly and impertinence. At length, separated from my party, tired with the scene, and wishing to avoid the crowd, I seated myself on a sofa behind one of the pillars; my feelings, I believe, gave a natural trait to the character, as I sat almost buried in contemplation. On lifting up my eyes I beheld a very elegant figure that had placed himself by me, he was only in a white silk domino, but in his whole form and manner there was an elegance and superiority that was undescribable. "I have been pursuing you, said he, but you have deluded all my efforts to attain a nearer view; you kept me at a distance, and, as usual, when I flattered myself I had arrived near enough to offer up my petition, you threw me farther

farther off than ever. Are you determined to treat me with unusual cruelty?" "I practise no cruelty designedly," answered I, "since I distinguish no objects partially; a superior power rules me, and I have only to pay implicit obedience to its dictates." "Alas," returned he, "would not the knowledge of deserving your favour, by paying you the utmost adoration, have some influence with you to be more kind, and to be less delusive." "Blame me not," said I, "for deceiving you, when it is the business of too many of your sex to deceive and delude the unwary: your conduct is infinitely more blameable than mine; but *both* shew their simplicity by disbelieving the numerous examples, the evidence of their own senses, continually represents to them; you meet with but your due punishment, when your hopes are disappointed." He sighed and took my hand, repeating,

"Deign

“ Deign sweet Hope to cheer my mind,
 “ Tell me where my pains will end ;
 “ And be propitious to my love.”

“ Indeed, said I, that is more than I can perhaps promise, I do not know who is your love, and *vanity* will keep you from despair without my aid.”

“ O no! pity me, my lovely Hope, it is impossible any disguise can conceal that beauteous form. O, Lady Lucy, *give me Hope!*” Maria, paint to yourself my astonishment, it was Beville! he had talked before in a feigned voice, but he spoke then in his own, and it was well for me the mask hid my confusion. I presently recovered, and replied, “ As you are, I find, a *friend*, I will endeavour for once to be *propitious*, for I will point the way to your love. *Intuition* has certainly discovered her, but perhaps you have lost her; *Miss Conway* you will find, I believe, in the room on the right hand, I am happy in being able to give you
 the

the desirable information, Mr. Beville." "Name her not, exclaimed he, intuition *has* pointed out my love in my charming Hope." Do you not feel for me, my dear? A secret pleasure run through all my veins, and I let my passive hand remain in his, without power to withdraw it. I was more like the statue of stupidity than the animated form I personated. "Can you imagine, my dear Lady Lucy, continued he, I could be sensible to the charms of Miss Conway after having seen *you*? No! my heart is yours, and yours alone. You know not the pain your coldness has given me; I impatiently waited for this amusement taking place, as the *only Hope* to relieve my anxiety, by gaining an opportunity of telling you how much I love! Deign then, sweet Hope, to smile upon me; and, believe me, the fear of offending alone has kept me silent. Miss Conway has thought fit to distinguish

tinguish me, but she is not the woman calculated to inspire my admiration by any means."

How was my gloom in an instant changed, and how was I elated?

"And oh! his charming tongue

"Was but too well acquainted with my weakness;

"He talk'd of love, and all my melting heart

"Dissolv'd within my breast."

The time, the place, the unexpectedness of the discovery, his form, his aspect, all seemed to have acquired unusual graces; his language was all enchantment. I confessed a partiality for him; I even acknowledged his attention to Miss Conway had given me pain; I blamed myself infinitely afterwards, but every circumstance conspired to my folly, and I could not resist his eloquence, nor had I resolution to move till the party came up. "We have been seeking you, my dear, said Lady Mary, if you are ready we mean to go." "Whenever you please," re-

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plied

plied I. Miss Conway was ready to die, and in an instant the smiles vanished from her face (for she had unmasked) upon my saying I had been sitting there the whole time, being fearful of making the tour of the rooms alone; and that part of it Mr. Beville had been chatting with me. "Your ladyship is particularly fond of a *tête à tête*," said she, and *this*, turning to Sir James, seems to have been more sociable than yours was the other night." He was too considerate, however, to take any notice, well knowing how much it would chagrin me. Out of gratitude I suffered him to hand me to the carriage, thinking he would be pleased at such a mark of my favour. He spoke not, but pressed my hand, and sighed deeply when he quitted it. Beville conducted Miss Conway, and, though I could not distinguish the words, I heard her voice in a kind of reproachful sarcastic tone, but he did not seem to regard

regard her much. When she came to the door, she flounced by without ever wishing me good night. Her aunt is a sweet amiable woman, she cannot help seeing her follies; but as she is only Sir Charles's niece, her ladyship is more cautious in noticing them. He married her, I believe, for love. I think I have heard she was rather obscure; but if so, she does credit to his discernment. The jewel must be estimable, and could only want a little polish to make it shine forth with unrivalled lustre.

I was exceedingly fatigued, and was going instantly to bed, but had a letter given me from Sir William, which I could not refrain from reading, it effectually deprived me of sleep; I enclose it for your perusal *. Till I opened it, my mind was filled with the
most

* See the preceding letter.

most pleasing sensations; you may readily believe they soon fled. I cannot divine who he means, I am convinced Beville has not wrote, as he never even hinted the name of guardian. I foresee a great deal of trouble that will arise from it: I would not willingly offend Sir William, but yet I cannot sacrifice my happiness. These reflections disturb me so much, that I must lay down my pen.

Ever yours,

LUCY LESSINGHAM,



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